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ABSTRACT

This report combines public school data from the 1983-84 "Administrator and Teacher Survey" of the High School and Beyond study with private school data from the 1985-86 Private School Survey in an analysis of differences in school climate and teachers' opinions in public and private secondary schools. It provides an opportunity to examine the private school sector with an independent data set that allows for a more detailed consideration of specific types of private schools. Data are included on public schools, Catholic schools, other religious private schools, and non-sectarian private schools. (JD)

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Survey Report

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Secondary School Teachers' Opinions: Public and Private Schools

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SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' OPINIONS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Reported differences between public and private schools in the area of academic achievement (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1985; Coleman and Hoffer, 1987) have resulted in efforts to evaluate differences in the school environments that might be associated with the increased school effectiveness observed in private schools. The logic being "... that schools with positive school climates are more effective at promoting the academic success of their students." (U.S. Department of Education, 1986).

Much of the extant literature on school climate has focused on elementary schools. Recently, efforts have been made to extend this work to secondary schools. In particular, Pallas (Teachers College Record, 1988) and Chubb and Moe (1988) have analyzed data from the "Administrator and Teacher Survey" of the High School and Beyond study to draw public and private school comparisons in school climate at the secondary level. The first of these analyses focused on public school versus Catholic school comparisons, while the second analysis also included elite private schools and other private schools. The results from the two studies are similar. While teachers in both public and private secondary schools were generally positive in their responses on various aspects of school climate, private school teachers were more likely to give positive responses for each of the reported dimensions.

The 1985-86 Private School Survey provides a basis for analyses of Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian private secondary schools. The survey instrument for the Private School Survey was designed to allow comparisons with some of the data on school climate and teachers' opinions from the High School and Beyond study. This report combines public school data from the 1983-84 "Administrator and Teacher Survey" of the High School and Beyond study with private school data from the 1985-86 Private School Survey in an analysis of differences in school climate and teachers' opinions between public and private secondary schools. It provides an opportunity to examine the private school sector with an independent data set that allows for a more detailed consideration of specific types of private schools. While these data are suitable for analyses of public and private school differences and within private school differences in school climate and teachers' opinions, they do not allow for analyses of differences in student achievement and school effectiveness.

Educational Goals for Students

Secondary school teachers in both surveys were asked to rank the following eight goals for students in order according to their importance:

- Basic literacy skills (reading, math, writing, speaking),
- Academic excellence, or mastery of the subject matter of the course,
- Citizenship (understanding institutions and public values),
- Specific occupational skills,
- Good work habits and self-discipline,

- Personal growth and fulfillment (self-esteem, personal efficacy, self-knowledge),
- Human relations skills (cultural understanding, getting along with others), and
- Moral or religious values.

Table 1.--Percent of secondary school teachers ranking goals for students as very important ("1" and "2" out of 8), by school characteristics* United States, 1983-86

Goals for Students	Public schools	Private schools			
		Total	Catholic	Other religious	Non-sectarian
Literacy skills	61 (0.8)	46 (1.4)	42 (2.0)	46 (2.6)	51 (3.5)
Academic excellence	33 (0.8)	30 (2.1)	30 (2.1)	26 (3.8)	34 (3.8)
Citizenship	7 (0.4)	4 (0.7)	4 (0.6)	3 (2.0)	4 (0.9)
Occupational skills	7 (0.4)	2 (0.3)	2 (0.4)	2 (0.5)	2 (0.7)
Good work habits/ self discipline	44 (0.7)	30 (1.9)	29 (2.1)	22 (2.9)	40 (3.6)
Personal growth	23 (0.6)	37 (1.8)	37 (1.7)	31 (3.6)	41 (4.8)
Human relations skills	15 (0.7)	14 (1.1)	14 (1.2)	10 (2.0)	19 (3.4)
Moral or religious values	10 (0.6)	41 (3.6)	41 (1.6)	61 (6.5)	6 (1.1)

*Since the first and second most important goals are combined, the percents for each of the school types add to 200 percent (with rounding error).

NOTE: Standard errors of estimates are presented in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "1985-86 Private School Survey." Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, "High School and Beyond Administrator and Teacher Survey (1984)."

Teachers in public secondary schools selected literacy skills as the first or second most important goal more often than any other goal (61 percent, table 1). This goal was followed by good work habits and self-discipline (44 percent), and academic excellence (33 percent). In Catholic and other religious secondary schools, literacy skills (42 and 46 percent, respectively) and moral and religious values (41 and 61 percent, respectively) were both rated as the most important goal for students; and good work habits and self-discipline, academic excellence, and personal growth were also selected by about one-quarter to one-third of the teachers. In nonsectarian private secondary schools, about one-half (51 percent) of the teachers selected literacy skills as the primary goal for their students; and at least one-third of the teachers also selected good work habits and self-discipline, academic excellence, and personal growth as very important goals for their students.

Specific occupational skills and citizenship were the least likely to be identified as the most important goals for students by all secondary school teachers. In addition, teachers in public and nonsectarian private secondary schools were not likely to select moral or religious values among the most important goals.

Teachers' Opinions

The two survey questionnaires included a common set of 16 statements designed to elicit teachers' opinions towards their schools, administrators, fellow teachers, and students. In this report, ratings of "strongly disagree," "disagree," and "slightly disagree" have been combined to indicate disagreement with the statement, while ratings of "slightly agree," "agree," and "strongly agree" have been combined to indicate agreement.

Eight of the statements relate to teachers' attitudes towards principals and school administration:

- The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.
- This school's administration knows the problems faced by the staff.
- The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.
- In this school the teachers and the administration are in close agreement on school discipline policy.
- The principal lets staff members know what is expected of them.
- The principal is interested in innovation and new ideas.
- Necessary materials (e.g., textbooks, supplies, copy machines) are readily available as needed by the staff.
- The principal does a poor job of getting resources for this school.

Table 2.--Percent of secondary school teachers agreeing with various statements relating to their principals and school administration: United States, 1983-86

School-related statement	Public schools	Private schools			
		Total	Catholic	Other religious	Non-sectarian
Principal communicates desires to staff	67 (1.3)	82 (1.7)	81 (1.5)	82 (3.4)	82 (2.9)
Administration knows problems faced by staff	61 (1.0)	78 (1.2)	79 (2.3)	80 (3.3)	75 (2.1)
Administration is supportive and encouraging of staff	67 (1.1)	82 (1.0)	81 (1.6)	84 (2.1)	81 (2.6)
Teachers and administrators agree on discipline policy	63 (1.3)	81 (1.2)	80 (2.1)	84 (2.5)	80 (3.3)
Principal lets staff know expectations	69 (1.1)	83 (1.1)	83 (1.3)	84 (1.5)	82 (2.6)
Principal interested in innovation and new ideas	65 (1.1)	83 (1.4)	80 (2.1)	84 (1.7)	85 (2.8)
Necessary materials are available to staff	66 (1.2)	84 (1.7)	86 (1.1)	84 (3.3)	82 (4.7)
Principal does poor job getting resources*	26 (1.0)	16 (1.2)	17 (1.4)	17 (2.3)	15 (3.0)

*In the case of a negative statement, the percent responding positively is (100 minus percent in agreement).

NOTE: Standard errors of estimates are presented in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "1985-86 Private School Survey." Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, "High School and Beyond Administrator and Teacher Survey (1984)."

The majority of public and private secondary school teachers responded positively on each of these eight statements. Approximately 80 percent of the teachers in each type of private secondary school gave positive responses to each of the eight statements, while 60 to 70 percent of the public secondary school teachers shared these positive attitudes towards their principals and school administration (table 2). Thus, relatively more teachers in public secondary schools expressed dissatisfaction with their principals and school administration (30 to 40 percent versus 15 to 20 percent).

Table 3.--Percent of secondary school teachers agreeing with various statements relating to their fellow teachers: United States, 1983-86

School-related statement	Public schools	Private schools			
		Total	Catholic	Other religious	Non-sectarian
Colleagues share beliefs and values re school mission	72 (0.8)	82 (1.0)	80 (1.6)	85 (1.3)	81 (2.5)
Cooperative effort among staff	67 (0.9)	88 (1.1)	85 (1.8)	87 (2.0)	92 (1.3)
Staff maintains high standards of performance	79 (0.7)	93 (1.7)	91 (1.0)	93 (4.0)	95 (1.6)
School seems like big family-cordial and close	41 (1.1)	79 (1.6)	78 (2.1)	81 (3.9)	79 (2.4)
Staff does not have much school spirit*	47 (1.1)	23 (2.2)	24 (2.2)	21 (3.6)	25 (3.4)

*In the case of a negative statement, the percent responding positively is (100 minus percent in agreement).

NOTE: Standard errors of estimates are presented in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "1985-86 Private School Survey." Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, "High School and Beyond Administrator and Teacher Survey (1984)."

Five of the 16 statements concern teachers' opinions of their fellow teachers:

- Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.
- There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.
- Staff members maintain high standards of performance for themselves.
- This school seems like a big family, everyone is so close and cordial.
- Staff members in this school generally don't have much school spirit.

At least three-quarters of all private secondary school teachers expressed positive attitudes towards their fellow teachers on each of these five items, with especially high levels of satisfaction concerning high standards of performance and cooperative efforts among staff (93 and 88 percent, respectively) (table 3). Again, these findings were consistent across the types of private schools. By way of comparison, two-thirds to three-quarters of the public school secondary teachers had positive opinions with regard to high standards of performance, cooperative effort and shared sense of school mission; but significantly fewer public school teachers gave good ratings on school spirit and sense of familial bond among the school staff (53 and 41 percent, respectively).

The remaining three questions concern teachers' attitudes toward the effect of disruptive student behavior on the classroom teaching environment:

- The level of student misbehavior (e.g., noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria or student lounge) and/or drug or alcohol use in this school interferes with my teaching.
- The amount of student tardiness and class cutting in this school interferes with my teaching.
- The attitudes and habits my students bring to my class greatly reduce their chances for academic success.

The positive attitudes that private secondary school teachers have towards their principals, school administrators, and fellow teachers carry over to their students, as well (table 4). Only one-third indicated that students' attitudes reduce their chances for academic success, and about one-sixth expressed concerns over student misbehavior, substance abuse, tardiness, and class cutting. These results are consistent in each of the private school types. In stark contrast, over one-half of the public secondary school teachers indicated that students' attitudes, tardiness, and class cutting have adverse effect on the classroom environment and the students' chance for academic success, and 38 percent indicated that student misbehavior, substance abuse or both interfere with their teaching.

Table 4.--Percent of secondary school teachers agreeing with various statements relating to their students' behavior: United States, 1983-86

School-related statement	Public schools	Private schools			
		Total	Catholic	Other religious	Non-sectarian
Student misbehavior/substance abuse interferes*	38 (0.9)	16 (1.6)	12 (1.8)	15 (2.3)	23 (3.6)
Student tardiness/classes cut interferes*	52 (1.2)	15 (1.1)	10 (0.6)	17 (2.2)	18 (2.9)
Student attitudes reduce chances for success*	61 (0.9)	31 (2.4)	26 (1.8)	28 (3.5)	42 (4.7)

*In the case of a negative statement, the percent responding positively is (100 minus percent in agreement).

Note: Standard errors of estimates are presented in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "1985-86 Private School Survey." Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, "High School and Beyond Administrator and Teacher Survey (1984)."

Summary

Secondary school teachers in public and private schools rank literacy skills as the most important goal for their students. When asked to rank eight goals for their students according to their importance in teaching, at least 40 percent of the teachers selected literacy skills as the first or second most important goal. In addition, religious private schools give equal emphasis to moral and religious goals as one of the most important goals for their students, and private school teachers in all types of schools give more weight to personal growth as a student goal than their contemporaries in public schools.

Earlier findings of public and private secondary school differences in school climate and teachers' opinions are corroborated in this analysis. Teachers in private secondary schools express positive attitudes towards their principals, school administration, fellow teachers, and students. In contrast, while teachers in public secondary schools have generally positive attitudes towards their principals and school administration, the percent of teachers expressing dissatisfaction is significantly higher in public than in private secondary schools. Similarly, while the majority

of public and private secondary school teachers have positive attitudes towards their fellow teachers, public school teachers are somewhat more likely to be dissatisfied with their peers. And public school teachers are especially more dissatisfied with their students.

Despite the differences observed between public and private schools, the results within private schools are strikingly similar. The one noticeable exception occurs in the relative importance assigned to moral and religious values as a high priority goal for students. While teachers in Catholic and other religious schools select this as one of the most important goals, it is not surprising that teachers in nonsectarian private schools are much less likely to select this goal; instead, they are somewhat more likely to emphasize good work habits and self-discipline.

In the case of teachers' opinions, the responses are very similar across the private school types. Furthermore, the extent of similarity within school type across certain data items is indicative of high inter-item correlations. These correlations are apparent in the statements relating to teachers' attitudes towards principals and school administration. Further analyses of these data, and in particular efforts directed at understanding the nature of public and private school differences, will be facilitated by data reduction procedures involving factor analysis and item analyses.

Survey Methodology and Data Reliability

The private school tabulations are estimates from the 1985-86 Private School Survey conducted by Westat, Inc. under contract with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The study was a multistage probability sample of private schools across the United States. The first stage was the sampling of 75 areas, consisting of counties or groups of contiguous counties, with probabilities proportional to the square root of the population in the area. The second stage was the selection of schools within the sampled areas with probabilities proportional to the square root of enrollment. The third and final stage was the sampling of teachers within the sampled schools.

The schools were selected from 1983 Private School Survey lists developed from all identifiable private schools in the 75 primary sampling units in 1983. Since the lists were not updated, schools established after 1983 were not generally eligible for sampling. The estimates for the 1985-86 study are weighted national totals for private school teachers in schools that were in existence in 1983.

The 1985-86 Private School Survey obtained responses from 5,295 teachers and 1,175 administrators of 1,387 private schools during spring 1986. This analysis is restricted to the 2,109 teachers in schools that contain 12th-grade students. By definition, this is likely to include some elementary school teachers in combined schools, where the school

climate is likely to be affected by the presence of secondary grades in the school setting. The overall response rates were 85 percent for schools and 76 percent for teachers. The sample counts on the public use tape reflect imputations for missing data; therefore the private school estimates in this report include cases with imputations for nonresponse.

The tabulations for public schools are estimates from the 1984 "Administrator and Teacher Survey" of the High School and Beyond study. The 1984 survey was one component of a five part supplemental survey developed by a consortium of five education research centers. The "Administrator and Teacher Survey" data were collected by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The multistage probability sampling techniques employed in this survey included a first stage of nine strata corresponding to different kinds of public and private schools. The second stage was the selection of a probability sample of 538 schools from which teachers were sampled randomly (Moles, 1987).

The 1984 "Administrator and Teacher Survey" of the High School and Beyond study obtained responses from 10,370 teachers and 402 administrators of 532 schools during 1984. This analysis was restricted to the 8,756 teachers in public schools. The overall response rate for school principals was 80 percent, and for teachers, 77 percent. Since the "Administrator and Teacher Survey" is a supplemental survey of the 1980-81 High School and Beyond study, the estimates for the 1984 supplemental survey are weighted national totals for school teachers in schools with 10th grades that existed in 1980-81 and were still in existence in the 1983-84 academic year.

For both studies, national estimates were constructed by weighting the responses to the questionnaires from the sample schools and teachers. Since the estimates were obtained from a sample of teachers, they are subject to sampling variability. The standard errors in tables 1 through 4 provide indications of the accuracy of each estimate in that the standard error of an estimate is a measure of the variability between the values of the estimate calculated from different samples and the value of the statistic in the population. The interval from two standard errors below the estimate to two standard errors above the estimate includes the population parameter in about 95 percent of all possible samples.

Because the two surveys used in this analysis were conducted separately, at different times, using different procedures, and different populations, standard errors that reflect the sample designs described above were computed separately for public and private secondary school teachers. Standard errors for the private school survey were computed using a balanced half sampling technique, known as balanced repeated replications (WESVAR, Flyer and Mohadjer, 1988). Standard errors for the public school data from the High School and Beyond, Administrator and Teacher Survey were computed using a Taylor series linearization (SESUDAAN, Shah, 1981). The results of these two variance estimation procedures are asymptotically equivalent; thus these standard errors were used in computing difference of means t-tests with appropriate Bonferroni adjustments for multiple comparisons (Hays, 1981). Comparisons cited in the text are significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Survey estimates are also subject to errors of reporting and errors made in the collection of the data. These errors, called nonsampling errors, can sometimes bias the data. While general sampling theory can be used to estimate the sampling variability of an estimate, nonsampling errors are not easy to measure and usually require either an experiment to be conducted as part of tne data collection procedure or use of data external to the study. Such studies are part of an ongoing effort to quantify problems in the data and to improve data collection procedures to eliminate or minimize biases that may enter the estimates.

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